




COMMENTARY


Facing war and economic hardship, which candidate can address Ukraine's biggest challenges?

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The 2019 Ukrainian presidential elections find the Eastern European country still engaged in conflict with Russia and struggling with implementing reforms in various sectors while its citizens have one of the lowest incomes in Europe.

Although the EuroMaidan provided hope to many Ukrainians of becoming an EU member state, this development still seems very far away as corruption still flourishes in Ukraine, oligarchs still control important sectors and the implementation of reforms have been done at a slow pace, which angered both the Ukrainian citizens and the external partners, such as the European Union, United States and International Monetary Fund. As of now, it is highly likely that next president of Ukraine will be either Petro Poroshenko, Yulia Tymoshenko or Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

The incumbent president of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, was widely criticized for not putting enough efforts in reducing the oligarchs' influence in the economic and political spheres, for not strengthening the rule of law and for the slow pace of the reforms that Ukraine committed to implement under the Association Agreement with the EU.

Although he brands himself as Ukraine's best option in opposing Russia and achieving EU integration, it remains to be seen if the Ukrainians citizens will grant him a second mandate. Yulia Tymoshenko, known as the "gas princess", is running on a populist platform and she's using aggressive and radical language. Although her political career started in the 90s, Tymoshenko brands herself as a revolutionary that will overthrow the system by making Ukraine a parliamentary republic. Her electoral manifesto includes a set of social policies targeted for the poor ones and a 50% cut in energy prices, which contradicts the Stand-by Agreement with the IMF.

Considered by many a "joke candidate", Volodymyr Zelenskiy represents the biggest surprise of the electoral campaign, as he managed to found support among young people under 30, as they crave for new faces in politics. His supporters see him as a reformer who will take on corruption and oligarchs, while his critics describe him as inexperienced politically and diplomatically. Zelenskiy's main campaign issue is anti-corruption and he has been attacking Poroshenko for failing to accomplish his campaign promises from 2014 when he vowed to tackle corruption and the oligarchs.

The question that this commentary will address is concerning the policy stances of the three candidates on foreign policy, anti-corruption policy, security and energy policy.

Foreign Policy

On foreign policy, Poroshenko seems the most determined and articulated among all the candidates, as he is strongly committed to Ukraine's EU and NATO integration, he backs the implementation of

reforms agreed with the IMF and EU, and he is trusted by diplomats from Brussels and Washington. Although the Western capitals are frustrated with the slow pace of reforms, they see Poroshenko as their best option in enhancing Ukraine's path to EU integration. For instance, Vox Ukraine, a respectful think-tank, ranks Poroshenko's party as the biggest backer of reforms in the Ukrainian Parliament.

Poroshenko's team stated at a Policy Lab on Ukrainian politics that the integration in the EU and NATO represent the backbone of their campaign¹. During the campaign trail, Poroshenko promised that under his presidency Ukraine will be ready to apply for membership in the European Union and in NATO. While even officials from the incumbent government of Ukraine admit that accession to the EU and NATO in five years' time is unfeasible, they reiterated that their strategy is to achieve a "de facto" integration of Ukraine in the EU, by joining the energy, custom and digital union of the EU. This plan seems feasible to implement but it is conditional on Ukraine's progress in implementing the reforms, especially concerning the rule of law and the reform of judiciary.

Foreign policy represents one of the biggest vulnerabilities to Tymoshenko, due to her past and anti-reform rhetoric². The gas deal from 2009, which sent her to prison because as prime-minister she agreed to buy Russian gas at a higher price than any other European country³, together with her vote in Parliament against a motion that condemned Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008⁴ indicate a troublesome past with Russia. As well, according to Oleksii Rozumnyi⁵:

Tymoshenko has a long history of relations with the most trusted representative of Putin among the Ukrainian politicians – Viktor Medvedchuk. Sometimes you can hear critical messages from Tymoshenko which resemble the rhetoric of the Kremlin (in particular, about the reluctance of the Ukrainian authorities to end the war, about the deliberate escalation of hostility by the Ukrainian side).

¹ At a Policy Lab on the Upcoming Ukrainian Elections, 25 February 2019

² Kuzio, Taras. Washington remains cool towards and suspicious of Yulia Tymoshenko. New Eastern Europe, 20 December 2018. Accessed on 13 February, 2019 <http://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/12/20/washington-remains-cool-towards-suspicious-yulia-tymoshenko/>

³ Auyezov, Olzhas. *Ukraine-Russia gas deal: Tymoshenko's biggest bet*. Reuters, 11 October 2011. Accessed on 6 January 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-tymoshenko-gas/ukraine-russia-gas-deal-tymoshenkos-biggest-bet-idUSTRE79A4AV20111011>

⁴ Lowe, Christian. *Russia finds unlikely ally in Ukraine's Tymoshenko*. Reuters, 5 October 2008. Accessed on 6 January, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-ukraine-tymoshenko-analysis/russia-finds-unlikely-ally-in-ukraines-tymoshenko-idUSTRE4940GP20081005?sp=true>

⁵ In an email conversation with the author, 26 March

Both Rozumnyi⁵ and Rozendaal⁶ argue that a drastic change in the course for rapprochement with Russia is highly unlikely because the majority of Tymoshenko's voters are patriotic people who like her image of a fighter for social justice. However, Rozumnyi warns that Tymoshenko's unofficial "double game" is a real threat, if she tries to bring Ukraine back to balancing between the West and Russia in order to strengthen her power.

Vox Ukraine argues that her party, Fatherland, offered the least support to the EU- and IMF- backed reforms from all parties that proclaim themselves as European⁷. She used inflammatory rhetoric against the reforms in general, and voted against the pension reforms, a key requirement for an IMF loan tranche. Problematic is also her attitude, as according to the New Eastern Europe⁸, she was arrogant and impulsive during meetings with top US official including Mike Pompeo in Washington, especially when she was questioned or challenged over her populist policies.

Regarding Zelenskiy, it cannot be stressed enough the fact that Zelenskiy would be a very inexperienced president of a country that in the past 5 years underwent through territorial loss and hard economic reforms⁹. Ukraine doesn't afford experiments as the United States did in 2016, as it needs a president that is willing to implement reforms, opposes Russia's aggression and take on corruption and oligarchs. Zelenskiy certainly does not fit this description and in case he emerges victorious, his inexperience and lack of specific plans would make him vulnerable to oligarchs and Russian political statecraft.

Furthermore, the encounters of EU leaders with populist leaders as Trump indicate that under a Zelenskiy presidency, the EU-Ukraine relations would be troublesome. Unlike Tymoshenko, who repeatedly stated that EU integration was her strategic goal, Zelensky declared his intention to sign the "Open Sky" Agreement with the EU, a promise that questions his commitment and knowledge in EU relations. Concerning how the EU-Ukraine relations would change under a Zelensky or Tymoshenko presidency, Oleksii Rozumnyi said the following¹⁰:

⁶ Viktoria Rozendaal, interviewed by author, 15 March 2019

⁷ Kuzio, Taras. *Spot the reformers among Ukraine's presidential candidates*. New Eastern Europe, 26 March 2019. Accessed on 27 March 2019. <http://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/03/26/spot-the-reformers-among-ukraines-presidential-candidates/>

⁸ Kuzio, Taras. *Washington remains cool towards and suspicious of Yulia Tymoshenko*. New Eastern Europe, 20 December 2018. Accessed on 13 February, 2019 <http://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/12/20/washington-remains-cool-towards-suspicious-yulia-tymoshenko/>

⁹ Motyl, Alexander. *Why a Zelenskiy Presidency Would Be a Disaster for Ukraine*. Atlantic Council, 19 February 2019. Accessed 12 March, 2019. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-a-zelenskiy-presidency-would-be-a-disaster-for-ukraine>

¹⁰ In an email conversation with the author, 26 March

They generally do not mind rapprochement with the EU, but they pay less attention to it than Poroshenko. Both Tymoshenko and Zelensky today do not reject cooperation with the IMF, although they criticize the terms of this cooperation, for being not sufficiently beneficial for Ukraine. In our opinion, under the presidency of Tymoshenko or Zelensky integration with the EU would cease to be an ideological priority for Ukraine, and the country's policy in this direction would become more selective and pragmatic.

Anti-Corruption Policy

Poroshenko is widely criticized for his unwillingness and ineffectiveness in tackling corruption. Both Nina Jankowicz¹¹ and Viktoria Rozendaal¹² argue that the lack of results in reducing corruption left many Ukrainians dissatisfied with Poroshenko and represents one of the factors that triggered the rise of Zelenskiy. Making matters worse for Poroshenko, a journalistic investigation by Bihus.info group revealed dubious dealings between one of his close associates and the Ministry of Defence, as the defence institution acquired military equipment at wildly inflated prices¹³. Nina Jankowicz argues that this investigation undermined all the electoral gains that he made after he assisted the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in securing autocephaly¹⁴.

Among the plans that Poroshenko put forward in the last months is a proposal of establishing a High Anti-Corruption Court. The Court will be composed of 27 judges, of whom 12 will sit in the appeals chamber¹⁵ and it is expected that it will accelerate the corruption trials because it will exclusively deal with corruption cases. The move is appreciated by Washington, IMF and Brussels and it is expected to have an important contribution in reducing corruption as it will be a good complement to the anti-corruption agencies.

However, Nina Jankowicz emphasizes that observers and the external partners of Ukraine must pay attention to the procedure under which the judges will be selected to sit on this Court, as their independency is crucial¹⁶. The Anti-Corruption Court is the latest addition to Ukraine's measures in the sphere of anti-corruption. According to Oleksii Rozumnyi, Poroshenko's public stance on anti-

¹¹ Nina Jankowicz, interviewed by author, 19 March 2019

¹² Viktoria Rozendaal, interviewed by author, 15 March 2019

¹³ Miller, Christian. *Sleaze scandals stalk Ukraine campaign*. Politico, 5 March 2019. Accessed on 5 March 2019. <https://www.politico.eu/article/petro-poroshenko-yulia-tymoshenko-ukraine-sleaze-scandals-stalk-ukraine-campaign/>

¹⁴ Nina Jankowicz, interviewed by author, 19 March 2019

¹⁵ Unian. *Anti-Corruption Court to be set up in February, Poroshenko says*. Unian, 16 December 2018. Accessed on 6 February 2019 <https://www.unian.info/politics/10379013-anti-corruption-court-to-be-set-up-in-february-poroshenko-says.html>

¹⁶ Nina Jankowicz, interviewed by author, 19 March 2019

corruption is to rely on independent Bodies-National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, National Agency on Corruption Prevention, State Bureau of Investigation- to fulfill their functions¹⁷.

Second, Poroshenko will put forward a renewed anti-corruption law that was scrapped by the Constitutional Court three weeks ago.¹⁸ The Ukrainian Parliament passed the anti-corruption law in 2015 and carried a sentence of up to 10 years in prison for officials who were unable to explain how they obtained their assets. As Ukraine's highest court ruled that the law is unconstitutional, the judicial proceedings against 65 top officials ended immediately.¹⁹

The ruling represents a big blow to Poroshenko, as this policy was one of his biggest accomplishments in combating anti-corruption. During a campaign event he promised that a new law will be drafted and put forward to Parliament. We can safely assume that Poroshenko and his party will support a new anti-corruption reform package; worthy to mention, in 2015, the anti-corruption measures were it a prerequisite for Kiev in accessing loans from the IMF and visa-free travel to the EU²⁰.

Tymoshenko vows to make the courts independent from politicians' influence, to dismiss the administration officials that receive bribes, and to eliminate the clan-oligarchic system from Ukraine. Tymoshenko backs Poroshenko's law that establishes the High Anti-Corruption Court, as long as the Ukrainian Presidency doesn't have any control over appointment of judges. As well, according to Oleksii Rozumnyi, she backs the optimization of the tax system by abolishing the "37 corrupt taxes"²¹.

One interesting proposal concerning anti-corruption is the use of blockchain in the Ukrainian public administration. Her campaign argues that new technological innovations such as blockchain could help establish such institutional mechanism that would track illegal activities as bribery²². At the Ukrainian Policy Lab 2019, Tymoshenko's team argued that Ukraine doesn't need more anti-corruption agencies but institutional mechanisms that prevent corruption crimes or bribes²³.

¹⁷ In an email conversation with the author, 26 March

¹⁸ Zinets, Natalia. Ukraine president tries to salvage corruption law as tough election looms. 28 February 2019 Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-election-corruption/ukraine-president-tries-to-salvage-corruption-law-as-tough-election-looms-idUSKCN1QH1XQ>

¹⁹ Raczkiwycz, Mark; Seddon, Max. *Ukraine's highest court rules against anti-corruption law*. Financial Times, 27 February 2019. Accessed on 27 February 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/6129085a-3ab1-11e9-b72b-2c7f526ca5d0>

²⁰ Raczkiwycz, Mark; Seddon, Max. *Ukraine's highest court rules against anti-corruption law*. Financial Times, 27 February 2019. Accessed on 27 February 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/6129085a-3ab1-11e9-b72b-2c7f526ca5d0>

²¹ In an email conversation with the author, 26 March

²² Grytsenko, Oksana. *Tymoshenko promises innovations, slams Poroshenko for 'fake patriotism'*. The Kyiv Post, 21 September 2018. Accessed on 9 February 2019. <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/tymoshenko-promises-innovations-slams-poroshenko-for-fake-patriotism.html>

²³ At a Policy Lab on the Upcoming Ukrainian Elections, 25 February 2019

Whether blockchain technology could provide this institutional mechanism or not, one thing is sure: Tymoshenko must be more specific on how she plans to tackle corruption, especially when we look at her past record. Tymoshenko was incarcerated in 2011 because of an unfavourable gas deal for Ukraine, which she agreed with Russia during her premier ministertenure.

Last year, she used undeclared money to finance her campaign lobbying in Washington and according to Rozumnyi there are questions regarding the financing of her campaign²¹. As well, Tymoshenko belongs to old political guard (same as Poroshenko), which allowed corruption to flourish in Ukraine. If Tymoshenko wants to appear credible on anti-corruption stance, she needs to put forward a detailed plan on how her presidency will address this issue.

Zelenskiy made corruption his main issue in the campaign.²⁴ According to both Viktoria Rozendaal²⁵ and Nina Jankowicz²⁶, Zelenskiy's rise can be explained by the lack of new faces in politics and because of Poroshenko's failure in tackling corruption as he promised in the previous campaign. The former comedian turned politician made corruption the key issue of his campaign and pledged to pursue a zero-tolerance should he become president²⁷.

According to Rozendaal²⁵, he finds common ground with Tymoshenko as he believes that Ukrainian public administration must be digitalized in order to make bribery or corruption crimes difficult to perpetrate. But he still is expected to provide specifics on how he will act should he become president. According to Oleksii Rozumnyi²⁸:

Zelensky uses the role of "a person from outside the system" with a strong sense of justice, playing with people's sentiments against elitist corruption. In the program, he promises full support to anti-corruption bodies and the Supreme Anti-Corruption Court. At the meeting with representatives of anti corruption non-governmental organizations, Zelensky has stated that he supports granting complete independence to specialized anti corruption institutions, providing the Anti-Corruption Court with all the necessary resources for high-quality and speedy conduct of proceeding, reforming the prosecution service, security service and a number of other measures.

²⁴ Olearchyk, Roman. *Ukraine comic gets serious about presidential bid*. Financial Times, 26 February 2019. Accessed on 29 February 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/d3d319c6-338c-11e9-bd3a-8b2a211d90d5>

²⁵ Viktoria Rozendaal, interviewed by author, 15 March 2019

²⁶ Nina Jankowicz, interviewed by author, 15 March 2019

²⁷ Talant, Bermet. *Inside Zelenskiy's campaign: How social media, TV fame can win him presidency*. The Kyiv Post, 7 March 2019. Accessed on 10 March 2019. <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/inside-zelenskiys-campaign-how-social-media-tv-fame-can-win-him-presidency.html>

²⁸ In an email conversation with the author, 26 March

Crimea

As Mr. Poroshenko's campaign is based on patriotic messages, it's not a surprise that he brands himself as the "commander in chief" and Ukrainians' best option in opposing Russia²⁹. His campaign motto has been "Army, Language, Faith", and it highlights some policies that he pursued during his mandate: higher budget for the military, new language law that eliminated the use of minority language in middle school and his role in helping the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to achieve autocephaly³⁰. Poroshenko increased the military budget from \$3.3 billion to \$7.8 billion³¹ and he promises to come up with an action plan for NATO membership by 2023³². Mr. Poroshenko seems very committed to integrating Ukraine's military in NATO's structure. For Kremlin, a victory of Poroshenko in the presidential elections represents the worse possible result.

The latest and the most popular measure was his assistance in the process of obtaining autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The move aimed to increase Ukraine social independence from Russia and to eliminate any territorial claim Russia might put forward³³. The same idea was behind the controversial language law, which establishes Ukrainian as the only language to be taught in secondary education. The law had negative repercussions on Ukraine's relations with Romania and Hungary, as these countries have a numerous community in Ukraine with schools taught in Romanian or Hungarian³⁰.

Tymoshenko stated that she never believed in the Minsk Agreement and proposes a new format to discuss the war in Eastern Ukraine, "Budapest Plus", which would consist of France, Germany, the EU and China³⁴. As Taras Kuzio already pointed out in the New Eastern Europe, such a format would not solve the main cause of the conflict in Ukraine, namely Russia's reluctance in accepting the sovereignty of its neighbors in deciding their own fate and geopolitical path³⁴. A new version of the

²⁹ Jarábik Balasz. *Patriotism, pressure, populism: How Poroshenko can win*. Euractiv, 6 March 2019. Accessed on 10 March 2019. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/patriotism-pressure-populism-how-poroshenko-can-win/>

³⁰ Jarábik, Balasz. *Patriotism, pressure, populism: How Poroshenko can win*. Euractiv, 6 March 2019. Accessed on 10 March 2019. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/patriotism-pressure-populism-how-poroshenko-can-win/>

³¹ Bershidsky, Leonid. *This Graft Scandal May Be Too Much Even for Ukraine*. Bloomberg 27 February 2019. Accessed on 10 March 2019 <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-02-27/ukraine-military-procurement-scandal-shakes-presidential-race>

³² Ukrinform. *President: Ukraine can get 'road map' for joining NATO until 2023*. Ukrinform, 25 March 2019. Accessed on 25 March 2019. <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/2666421-president-ukraine-can-get-road-map-for-joining-nato-until-2023.html>

³³ Seddon, Max.; Olearchyk Roman. *Ukraine's Poroshenko uses Orthodox church to boost re-election bid*. Financial Times, 19 February 2019. Accessed on 25 February 2019 <https://www.ft.com/content/5c91bea8-29ff-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7>

³⁴ Kuzio, Taras. *Tymoshenko's 'Budapest plus' is anti-war populism and can never work*. New Eastern Europe, 15 November 2019. Accessed on 25 February 2019 <http://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/11/15/tymoshenkos-budapest-plus-anti-war-populism-can-never-work/>

Budapest Memorandum will not work, as Russia already broke it in 2014, when it violated Ukraine's territorial integrity by annexing Crimea and occupying the regions of Lugansk and Donbass. As long as new formats such as the Budapest Memorandum do not address Russia's expansionist behavior, it doesn't make any sense in pursuing one. Furthermore, by inviting China to the talks³⁴, a staunch Russia ally in the UN Security Council, will only benefit Kremlin's agenda in Ukraine.

According to Rozendaal³⁵ and Jankowicz³⁶, Zelenskiy's Crimea approach is similar to Tymoshenko's, as he believes that the Minsk Agreement is not functional, and a new format is needed. Although he also advanced the idea of reviving the Budapest Memorandum, Zelenskiy is still unclear on how such a format would work out. He insisted that the main goal should be achieving peace and promised to his supporters that he will directly negotiate with Putin to end the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and stated last year that "will have to talk . . . coming together somewhere in the middle"³⁷.

Many fear that Zelenskiy will be open to concessions to Russia in order to achieve peace. This would represent a huge victory to Russia as Ukraine will suffer territorial loss just because it chooses a different direction than Russia. As well, a concession would represent a huge blow to the European Union, as it will witness territorial transfer through military aggression on the European continent, something that haven't happen in long time.

Would Mr. Zelenskiy become the Ukrainian president, he and his team should carefully select security and diplomatic experts to wisely advise him on how to proceed in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. If not, there is a high risk of having the wrong people giving the wrong advice³⁸. There are suspicions concerning Zelenskiy's relation with Ilhor Komolskiy, one of the most powerful oligarchs from Ukraine, who owns the TV channel 1+1 which hosts Zelenskiy's "Servant of the People" show and which provides media support to him³⁷.

³⁵ Viktoria Rozendaal, interviewed by author, 15 March 2019

³⁶ Nina Jankowicz, interviewed by author, 19 March 2019

³⁷ Olearchyk, Roman. *Ukraine comic gets serious about presidential bid*. Financial Times, 26 February 2019. Accessed on 29 February 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/d3d319c6-338c-11e9-bd3a-8b2a211d90d5>

³⁸ Motyl, Alexander. *Why a Zelenskiy Presidency Would Be a Disaster for Ukraine*. Atlantic Council, 19 February 2019. Accessed 12 March, 2019. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-a-zelenskiy-presidency-would-be-a-disaster-for-ukraine>

Energy Policy

Poroshenko, together with the Ukrainian government succeeded in making a Stand-By Agreement with the IMF, securing a new \$3.9 billion loan³⁹. Ukraine agreed to achieve market prices in the energy sector for households and industrial consumption, as prices had been kept artificially low since the Soviet era⁴⁰. According to Andrian Prokip, higher energy prices would empower Ukraine in achieving energy self-sufficiency, a crucial element for the security of a country engaged in the war with Russia.

Achieving market prices for energy would also increase the attractiveness of Ukraine energy sector for foreign investors. According to Euractiv, US companies are interested in increasing their investments in Ukraine's energy sector if the pursuit for achieving market prices continues⁴¹. As well, Naftogaz, Ukraine's state owned energy company that carries out around 80 percent of domestic gas production, is profitable again⁴⁰.

Although the energy reforms are welcomed by foreign investors and external partners of Ukraine, they are very unpopular among ordinary citizens. Ukraine is a country with one of the lowest incomes in Europe and for ordinary Ukrainians, the energy cost accounts for a large share of their monthly expenditure⁴². Despite government subsidies for poor household to cover their energy consumption, the living standards of a large part of the society is affected by higher energy prices⁴².

In order to attract these voters, Tymoshenko proposes a 50 percent cut in energy prices for households⁴⁰. It is not clear how Tymoshenko would manage to convince the EU and IMF to accept such a populist measure as these institutions clearly expect from the Ukrainian government to achieve market prices for energy as agreed last year⁴¹. A cut in energy prices will make Naftogaz unprofitable again and it will end the dreams of many Ukrainian policymakers of achieving energy independence⁴².

³⁹ International Monetary Fund. *IMF and Ukrainian Authorities Reach Staff Level Agreement on a New Stand-By Arrangement*. Press Release: 18 October 2018: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/10/19/pr18392-imf-and-ukrainian-authorities-reach-staff-level-agreement-on-a-new-stand-by-arrangement>

⁴⁰ Prokip, Andrian. *What a Yulia Tymoshenko Presidency Could Mean for Ukraine's Energy Reforms*, Wilson Center, 1 November 2018. Accessed on 25 February 2019. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/what-yulia-tymoshenko-presidency-could-mean-for-ukraines-energy-reforms>

⁴¹ Rapier, Robert. *Ukraine's elections highlight deep divides over natural gas*. Euractiv, 15 February 2019. Accessed on 25 February. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/ukraines-elections-highlight-deep-divides-over-natural-gas/>

⁴² Prokip, Andrian. *The Kerfuffle Over Increasing Gas Prices in Ukraine*. Wilson Center, 14 September 2018). Accessed on 27 February 2019: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/the-kerfuffle-over-increasing-gas-prices-ukraine>

Tymoshenko made clear her intent to liquidate Naftogaz if she emerges victorious in the presidential election⁴⁰. She expressed many times her dissatisfaction with how Naftogaz is run and described it as a useless corrupt middle-man. Tymoshenko proposes that UkrGazVydobuvannya, a subsidiary of Naftogaz to sell domestically produced gas, instead of importing gas from abroad, as the domestic gas will be at a lower cost than imported gas⁴⁰. Moreover, Naftogaz liquidation would threaten Ukraine's finances, as the energy company is the biggest contributor to the budget by ensuring one-fifth of the budget revenues⁴³.

On energy policy, Zelenskiy's campaign is being ambiguous as it is the case when it comes other policy fields as well. Would Zelenskiy become president, his commitment to carry out reforms and respect the agreement with the IMF will be crucial for having a good relationship with the EU and USA. The comedian already expressed his desire to work with the international institution. However, it remains to be seen how this declarative willingness would translate into reality. Though the goal of achieving market prices for energy in Ukraine is, no doubt, the right policy course to follow it requires a significant investment of political capital as Ukrainians have to pay more for the energy that they consume. The question surrounding an eventual presidential mandate of Zelenskiy is if he will be willing to go further with the IMF reforms, taking into consideration his populist tendency.

⁴³ Prokip, Andrian. *What a Yulia Tymoshenko Presidency Could Mean for Ukraine's Energy Reforms*, Wilson Center, 1 November 2018. Accessed on 25 February 2019. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/what-yulia-tymoshenko-presidency-could-mean-for-ukraines-energy-reforms>

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